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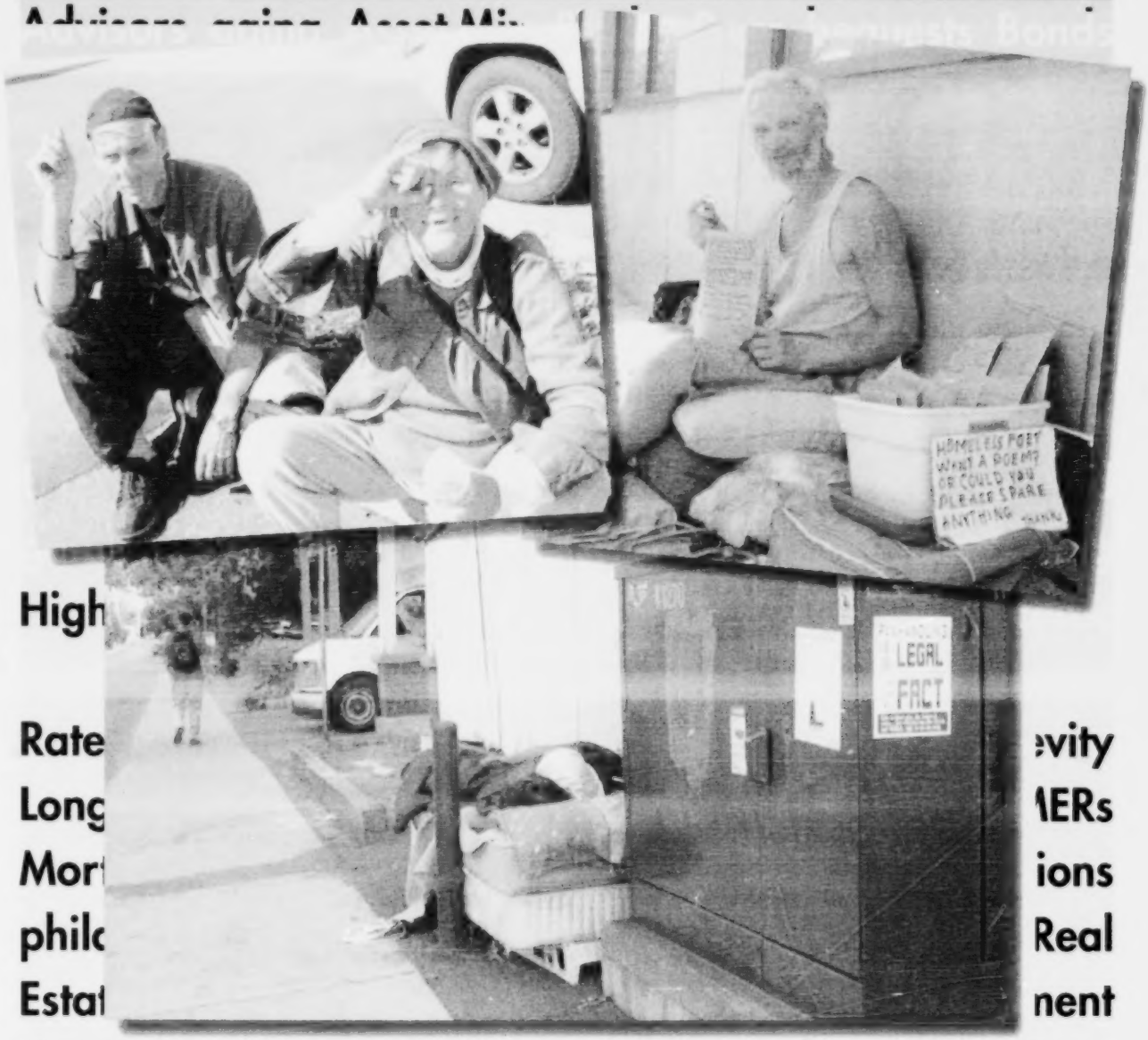

Votes on Poverty in Canada:

- Defining the problem
- Working strategies
- Measuring success

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Cover photographs by Zoom, a social activist and award-winning blogger. She can be found at knitnut.net.

Top photo: Karen, originally from the Northwest Territories, with her friend.

Middle: Crazzy Dave, a homeless poetry busker, who since October 2006, has been living 24/7 behind the Chapters store.

Bottom: The Only True Bluesman, a one-armed guitar-playing panhandler.

Editorial

By Marcel Lauzière

In the last issue of *Perception*, I described the new strategic approach of the CCSD and its focus on sharing social innovation and knowledge about what works across the country. Our intent is to help those who are 'doing' social development – wherever they are – to more easily connect with others facing similar challenges and thereby benefit from other experiences and approaches.

In this issue, I want to talk about our specific focus around poverty reduction.

The context for talking about poverty in Canada – and more importantly, about actually *doing something about it* – has changed considerably in just a few years. We need to capitalize on the momentum that is building. Many of us feel that we are at a crucial juncture, and that the stars are aligning in favour of a collective effort against poverty in Canada.

At the provincial level, Québec is no longer alone in identifying poverty as a 21st century challenge that needs to be addressed. Newfoundland and Labrador has also developed its own unique poverty reduction strategy and over the next decade, their goal is to go from the province with the highest levels of poverty to the one with the lowest. Now that is a goal that can indeed mobilize and inspire.

In the last Ontario election, Premier McGuinty pledged to develop a poverty reduction strategy for the province, and in Nova Scotia, legislation passed in 2007 established a poverty reduction strategic working group. And while some of the other provinces may not have progressed as far, actions are being taken across the board to address poverty.

At the federal level, I think that poverty will be a key issue in the next elections. But of course, poverty reduction is not just the affair of governments.

There are many exciting initiatives being developed within communities these days; in fact, this is where much of the momentum is being generated. And it is happening across the country. In Saint John, New Brunswick, the Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative comes to mind. In Québec, the work being done in the St-Michel neighbourhood is paving a new way forward. In Hamilton, the Roundtable for Poverty Reduction is attracting much attention and in Calgary, the Task Force to End Homelessness recently launched its blueprint for change which is getting much support. And there are many other examples in every region of the country.

The issue of poverty seems to be popping up everywhere you turn – even within the ranks of the 'unusual suspects.' Organizations working in areas as diverse as chronic disease, sports, crime prevention, and even businesses are increasingly realizing that the problems of poverty must be addressed.

Now we can actually talk about reaching a critical mass. And we can – and should – build on this.

I think there are two main reasons that underlie this new-found – and welcome – interest in poverty.

The first is that the constituency to fight poverty has grown and diversified. More people are realizing that poverty must be addressed not only for reasons of social justice. Many are motivated to do something about poverty in Canada because they want to strengthen our economic development, improve our health outcomes and reduce expenditures, raise the educational achievement of our children, or help reduce crime. Now, individuals, organizations and governments are coming to the issue of poverty for a multiplicity of reasons, and that's a good thing.

Secondly, the fact that international experience now shows that poverty *can* be significantly reduced is also important. In countries with which we often compare ourselves – such as the UK and Ireland, in particular – there has been real progress made against poverty, and good results are starting to show in New Zealand. And here in Canada, the Québec experience is demonstrating some very positive outcomes as well.

In the past, we often heard that poverty rates could not come down in any significant way. Proponents of that view are now being proven wrong.

Significant poverty reduction in Canada IS doable, and the CCSD wants to be part of helping to make that happen.

Marcel Lauzière is President of the Canadian Council on Social Development.

Defining and Re-defining Poverty in Canada

What does it mean when people talk about "poverty"?

Certainly no one will say it's a good thing. And even the most conservative of pundits decry the idea of having poor children and poor families.

But what does it mean when we refer to poverty in Canada?

Many people imagine sickly children on the edge of starvation. But in highly industrialized societies like Canada, that scene is not typical.

Instead what prevails is deprivation and need. True, certain pockets in some inner cities and on some Aboriginal reserves reflect living conditions that resemble the want and deprivation of under-developed countries.

In Canada, however, poverty is more typically associated with a lack of income – or too little income – to ensure people's physical well-being. Being poor here usually means having difficulty covering the basic essentials of food, shelter and clothing. It means having to use food banks each month, and living in over-crowded or substandard housing. And for an increasing number of Canadians – including families with children – it may mean having no roof at all.

Many social scientists acknowledge that living in poverty restricts not only the *physical* security of people's lives, it also has a detrimental impact on their psychological and social well-being and on their ability to participate in life's activities – concerns that workers in community-based and social service agencies have warned about for years.

How many people are poor in Canada?

The short answer is: Too many.
Too many children who cannot concentrate at school because they are hungry. Too many workers who struggle to make ends meet, despite having full-time jobs. Too many people living with disabilities, and too many Aboriginals and new immigrants who have too little income or supports to be able to live healthy lives.

The longer answer is: It depends on what measure you use to define poverty.
Unlike some other countries, including the United States, Canada has no official poverty line. Different agencies measure poverty in different ways and each of the definitions make certain assumptions. Given the complexity of the problem – the fact that what constitutes poverty can vary from place to place, from decade to decade, and even from household to household – none of the definitions are exhaustive or precise. They are all working measures which can only provide estimates of the scope of the problem.

What is being measured?

Defining a poverty line is necessary if we want to analyze not only the *incidence* of poverty, but also the *depth* of poverty (how poor are the poor?) and its *duration* (how long are the poor, poor?). And the analysis must also be done for different types of families, persons of different ages, and the like.

Some measures define poverty in *absolute* terms – that is, an inability to meet very basic needs – while other measures define it in *relative* terms, as an unacceptable distance from established community norms.

In fact, virtually all measures of poverty or low income are relative. Whether it is defined in terms of a given level of income compared to the average (an income line), or in terms of the cost of a basket of goods and services compared to the average, it is really a matter of how great a distance we are prepared to accept between "the poor" and the rest of society.

The CCSD and most social welfare advocates support a relatively generous poverty line, because they recognize that people's needs are social as well as physical. To be poor is to experience a significant degree of exclusion from the wider society, and not just to be deprived of very basic needs.

THREE MEASURES OF POVERTY

Low Income Cut-Offs (LICOs)

Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Offs (LICOs) are perhaps the best known and most widely used measure of low income in Canada. The LICOs define a set of income levels or thresholds below which people may be said to live in "straitened circumstances." And while Statistics Canada maintains that the LICOs are "quite different from measures of poverty," they concede that the LICO lines identify "those who are substantially worse off than the average."

Statistics Canada defines a low-income household as one which spends a much higher proportion of its income on the necessities of life – food, shelter and clothing – than does an average equivalent household. Data on family spending patterns are collected annually through the Survey of Household Spending (formerly the Family Expenditure Survey), with LICO lines calculated by adding 20 percentage points to the proportion of income spent by an equivalent household. To reflect differences in the costs of these necessities, LICOs are defined for seven family sizes and five sizes of communities, using either before- or after-tax income. LICOs are re-based periodically to account for changes in household spending patterns. (Currently, the average household spends about 35% of its pre-tax income on these three necessities, so a low-income household is defined as one which spends more than about 55% on necessities.)

Low Income Measure (LIM)

Unlike LICOs, the LIM is based directly on income rather than the proportion of income spent on certain goods. It is a purely relative measure of poverty, calculated as 50% of median gross income – that is, half the population has a higher income and half has a lower income. This then becomes the basic LIM for one person, and upward adjustments are made according to the number of adults and children in the household. No adjustments are made for the size of the community of residence.

LIMs are most often used in international comparisons of poverty, and can be calculated using before- or after-tax income.

Market Basket Measure (MBM)

The Market Basket Measure is one of the newest measures of low income. Developed in 2003 by Human Resources Development Canada, in consultation with a working group of federal-provincial-territorial officials, the MBM was

Low Income Cut-offs (LICOs), Before- and After-taxes, 2006
(1992 base)

Family Size	Before-tax Population 500,000+	After-tax 500,000+	Before-tax 100,000 - 499,000	After-tax 100,000 - 499,000	Before-tax 30,000 - 99,000	After-tax 30,000 - 99,000	Before-tax Less than 30,000*	After-tax Less than 30,000*	Before-tax Rural Areas	After-tax Rural Areas
1	$21,202	$17,570	$18,260	$14,859	$18,147	$14,674	$16,605	$13,154	$14,596	$11,494
2	$26,396	$21,384	$22,731	$18,085	$22,591	$17,860	$20,671	$16,010	$18,170	$13,989
3	$32,450	$26,628	$27,945	$22,519	$27,773	$22,239	$25,412	$19,934	$22,338	$17,420
4	$39,399	$33,221	$33,930	$28,095	$33,721	$27,745	$30,855	$24,871	$27,122	$21,731
5	$44,686	$37,828	$38,482	$31,992	$38,245	$31,594	$34,995	$28,321	$30,760	$24,746
6	$50,397	$41,953	$43,402	$35,480	$43,135	$35,039	$39,469	$31,409	$34,694	$27,444
7	$56,110	$46,077	$48,322	$38,967	$48,024	$38,483	$43,943	$34,496	$38,626	$30,142

* Includes cities with a population between 15,000 and 30,000 as well as small urban areas under 15,000 population.
Source: Prepared by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-offs for 2006 and Low Income Measures for 2005. Cat. 75F0002MIE-004.

Before-tax LIMs, 2005

	Number of Children					
No. of Adults	0	1	2	3	4	5
1	$16,734	$23,428	$28,448	$33,468	$38,488	$43,508
2	$23,428	$28,448	$33,468	$38,488	$43,508	$48,529
3	$30,121	$35,141	$40,162	$45,182	$50,202	$55,222
4	$36,815	$41,835	$46,855	$51,875	$56,896	$61,916

After-tax LIMs, 2005

	Number of Children					
No. of Adults	0	1	2	3	4	5
1	$14,604	$20,446	$24,827	$29,208	$33,589	$37,970
2	$20,446	$24,827	$29,208	$33,589	$37,970	$42,352
3	$26,287	$30,668	$35,050	$39,431	$43,812	$48,193
4	$32,129	$36,510	$40,891	$45,272	$49,654	$54,035

Source: Statistics Canada. Low Income Cut-offs for 2006 and Low Income Measures for 2005. Cat. 75F0002MIE-004.

designed "to complement existing low-income measures that are used to help track low-income trends among Canada's children" and to provide a "creditable" standard of living, not just bare-bones survival.

The "basket" of goods and services on which the MBM is based includes annual expenditures in five areas for a reference family of two adults and two children. It includes: food costs sufficient to ensure a nutritious diet; costs for clothing and footwear; shelter costs based on average rents for two- and three-bedroom apartments; transportation costs for a transit pass in larger urban areas or the operating costs for a used vehicle; and an allowance for other household needs such as school supplies, personal care products, a telephone, and the like.

To account for differences in living costs across the country, the MBM is calculated for various types of families in 48 different geographies in the 10 provinces and is adjusted for inflation. Information on the Territories has not yet been included in the MBM due to methodological problems in costing some components of the basket.

In 2002, the most recent year for which MBM data are available, the poverty rate in Canada was 13.7% – 2.1 percentage points higher than the poverty rate derived using after-tax LICOs. Slightly higher rates using the MBM are attributed to its stricter definition of "disposable income." To calculate disposable income, the MBM deducts such items as payroll taxes, out-of-pocket costs for child care and prescription drugs, in addition to income taxes.[1]

So how many people are poor in Canada? Too many, by any measure!

1 Human Resources and Social Development Canada. *Low Income in Canada: 2000-2004, Using the Market Basket Measure.* Ottawa: 2008. (forthcoming)

Towards a National Ideal:
Canada Without Poverty by 2020

By Rob Rainer

Affixed to the outside of an Ottawa shelter is a sign which reads: *Serving the homeless since 1906*. Those words testify to the dedication of generations of shelter staff and volunteers. Kudos to these humanitarians who, for over 100 years, have offered their hearts, minds and hands to serve some of the most vulnerable and often the most desperate people in all of Canada.

Unfortunately, those words also reflect the persistence of poverty in a land of plenty.

Consider that in 2005 (the latest year for which figures on "low income" are available from Statistics Canada), an estimated 3.4 million Canadians – 11% of the population – lived in poverty.[1] True, that was an encouraging decrease from the high of 4.6 million people in poverty in 1996 (16% of the population).[2] And yet the number of people in poverty in 2005 was the same as it was in 1992[3] – and interestingly, about equivalent to the entire Canadian population at the time of Confederation in 1867.[4] There were also 700,000 more people living in poverty in 2005 than there had been in 1989 when the percentage of low-income Canadians was at 10%, its lowest point over the 25-year period from 1980-2005.[5]

Such statistics would seem to justify the belief that "the poor will always be among us." But can that belief be countered by another: that poverty can not only be reduced, it can ultimately be eradicated? And can a belief in a Canada without poverty lead us to actions that would, indeed, "make poverty history" in our time?

The American philosopher and award-winning writer, Sam Harris, contends that "a belief is a lever that, once pulled, moves almost everything else in a person's life....Your beliefs

Imagine...
Canada Without Poverty

In February 2008, the following vision statement was adopted by NAPO's Board of Directors:

> The National Anti-Poverty Organization believes that poverty is a violation of the human right to security of the person and, with reference to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the legal right to security of the person.
>
> We further believe that poverty is an affront to the values of fairness, justice and the inclusion of all persons in Canadian society. We therefore contend that for these reasons, poverty must be eradicated.
>
> The National Anti-Poverty Organization envisions poverty's eradication in Canada by 2020. We envision this goal being reached through the exercise of political will, corporate social responsibility and community engagement.
>
> By 2020, sufficient policies, legislation and programs will exist to ensure sufficient income and other social supports that meet the needs of everyone. Canadians will have built a strong social foundation, such that everyone may live with a sense of dignity, pursue opportunities for achievement and fulfillment, and embrace the responsibilities of citizenship and community.

define your vision of the world; they dictate your behavior; they determine your emotional responses to other human beings."[6]

If Harris is right, poverty in Canada *could* be eliminated if a sufficient number of Canadians believe that such a national ideal is possible – *and* they follow through with the behaviour necessary to lead to profound social change.

Unfortunately we have no way of knowing where Canadians stand on this score today. To my knowledge, we have not even been asked the question or sufficiently challenged to consider this as a national ideal. We do know from recent polls, however, that a very strong majority – about nine of every 10 Canadians – want their governments to take action on poverty and on the ever-widening gap in income and wealth.[7,8]

Central to making progress on poverty may be whether most Canadians believe – or could come to believe – that poverty is a violation of the human right to security of the person. Once one believes this, it should follow that poverty, like other human rights violations such as slavery and torture, must be not merely reduced, but eliminated.

We know from recent polls that a very strong majority – about nine of every 10 Canadians – want their governments to take action on poverty and on the ever-widening gap in income and wealth.

Based on this belief, the National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) is calling for the eradication of poverty in Canada by 2020. Our vision is inspired by a great Canadian, former

If any country should be able to eradicate poverty, it is Canada. We have one of the highest levels of economic productivity per capita in the world.

justice of the Supreme Court of Canada and presently the outgoing UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour. On the occasion of International Human Rights Day 2006, Ms. Arbour stated that:

> "Combating poverty, deprivation and exclusion is not a matter of charity, and it does not depend on how rich a country is. By tackling poverty as a matter of human rights obligation, the world will have a better chance of abolishing this scourge in our lifetime. Poverty eradication is an achievable goal."

If any country should be able to eradicate poverty, it is Canada. We have one of the highest levels of economic productivity per capita in the world. By September 2007, we had a national net worth of $5.4 trillion – a whopping $163,700 per capita![9] We have 25 billionaires among us (March 2008[10]) and an ever-rising number of millionaires, potentially reaching 900,000 by 2010.[11]

Amidst such vast wealth, it is inexcusable that 720,000 Canadians had to make use of food banks in March 2007 – up 91% from 1989.[12] And there can be no excuse for why 150,000 to 300,000 Canadians remain "homeless in a growth economy."[13]

The good news is that we can harness a generosity of spirit, our intelligence and our commitment to turn things around. The way forward should include a National Anti-Poverty Act to identify targets and timelines

for poverty reduction in the short term and poverty eradication in the longer term. The way forward should include a National Anti-Poverty Plan to back-up the Act, a plan which is informed by the insights and ideas of citizens in poverty, one which fleshes out specific measures to strengthen income security and other critical forms of social supports, and a plan which identifies the roles and responsibilities of governments, the private sector and civil society. And the way forward should also include the establishment of an office for a national poverty commissioner who would regularly, independently and objectively report on progress on this issue.

It is inexcusable that 720,000 Canadians had to make use of food banks in March 2007. And there can be no excuse for why 150,000 to 300,000 Canadians remain 'homeless in a growth economy.'

If enough Canadians believe in the possibility of poverty eradication as a moral and practical imperative – and they act on that belief – our food banks and shelters, so necessary in 2008, can eventually be closed when there are no more hungry and homeless people to serve.

Let us set the bar high now for poverty eradication, not merely reduction. And let us strive accordingly, eager for success and unafraid to fail. Can there be a more worthy national ideal?

Rob Rainer is Executive Director of the National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO). Founded in 1971 and based in Ottawa, NAPO is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of people with personal experience of living in poverty. In 1993, NAPO became the first non-governmental organization in the world to appear before the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. For more information, visit www.napo-onap.ca, call 613-789-0096 (1-800-810-1076), or send an email to info@napo-onap.ca.

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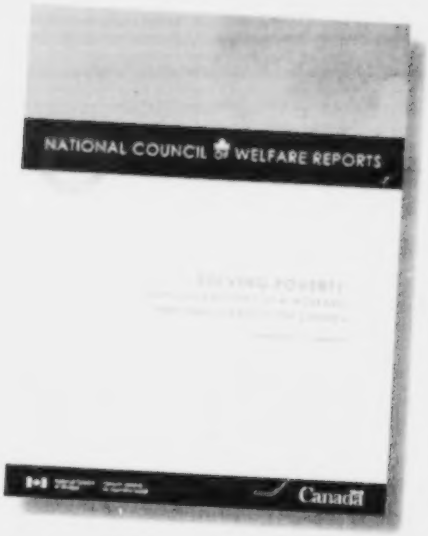
Solving Poverty:
Four Cornerstones of a Workable National Strategy for Canada

by Sheila Regehr



The National Council of Welfare (NCW) has been tracking poverty statistics for a quarter-century. During that time, poverty rates among Canadian seniors have dropped dramatically, but there has been little lasting change for other adults and children over those 25 years. In some cases, social assistance rates are worse, and many adults with employment are still living in poverty. Income inequality has been increasing and income security decreasing.

This reality does not fit the image most Canadians have of their country. With its relative wealth, Canada could be a leader in the fight against poverty, but instead, it is falling behind. Global evidence indicates that poverty and insecurity *can* be reduced, with economies and societies stronger as a result.

Against this backdrop, in 2006 the NCW looked outward to learn more about what was working and getting results.

Anti-poverty strategies in other countries

Our search began in Europe, where a common framework guides the 25 countries of the **European Union**. The main objectives of the framework are to promote:

- social cohesion, equality between men and women, and equal opportunities for all through accessible, financially sustainable, adaptable and efficient social protection systems and social inclusion policies;
- effective and mutual interaction among policies for greater economic growth, more and better jobs, and greater social cohesion, as well as sustainable development;
- good governance, transparency and the involvement of stakeholders in the design, implementation and monitoring of policy.

What stands out in this framework is that it does not isolate poverty; instead, it is connected to larger economic, social and political issues. And the EU countries publish plans and progress reports which help share experiences and create healthy competition.

Sweden's objective is to become the world's best country in which to grow old. Its model features a universal welfare policy and an active labour-market policy, and its poverty rates have been very low for many years compared to those in Canada, especially among lone-parents. Sweden's welfare system includes general health and social care, social insurance to provide financial security in times of illness, disability and old age and for families with young children, as well as supplementary protection in the form of financial assistance.

The **United Kingdom** has set an ambitious target of cutting child poverty in half by 2010 and eradicating it by 2020. Specific program targets include affordable childcare places for all children aged 3 to 14 years by 2010. And while the UK still has much work to do, it is making progress. For example, the proportion of children who live in households at-risk of poverty has dropped from 27% in 1997/98 – among the highest in Europe – to 22% by 2004/05, closer to the EU-25 average of 20%. And since 1999, about 800,000 children in the UK have been lifted out of relative poverty.

Ireland has set very ambitious targets to reduce and eliminate what it calls "consistent" poverty. A 10-year National Anti-Poverty Strategy was launched in 1997 after consultations with stakeholders – including people in poverty – about the design of the strategy. Results so far have been impressive: the rate of consistent poverty dropped from 15.1% in 1994 to 5.2% by 2001.

Two key features of New Zealand's approach are its extensive use of consultations and the annual publication of indicators of social well-being to monitor trends and make comparisons with other countries.

Canada can also look to **New Zealand** for relevant experience. In 2003, it adopted a new social development approach whose main elements include social protection and social investment. Greater attention is paid to disadvantaged populations, and its new youth strategy includes respect for the treaty-based restorative process to help young Maori reconnect with their genealogy, tribes and nation. Two key features of New Zealand's approach are its extensive use of consultations and the annual publication of indicators of social well-being to monitor trends and make comparisons with other countries.

Around the globe, the fight against poverty is linked to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which include cutting extreme poverty in half by 2015. Almost all developing countries have a poverty eradication action plan (PEAP), and Canada can learn from those whose struggles are more severe than ours.

In Canada

Although Canada has never had a national anti-poverty strategy, Quebec and Newfoundland-Labrador both have developed provincial strategies which share much in common with each other and with other country examples. In addition, many proposals have been made over the years on how to fight poverty, indicating that Canada lacks action, not good ideas.

When the NCW asked Canadians what they thought about a national strategy, over 5,000 individuals and 400 organizations responded to our on-line questionnaire. The diversity of respondents was impressive – different ages, languages, education levels, income, family and other backgrounds – yet there was overwhelming agreement that fighting poverty should be a higher government priority and that federal leadership is needed.

Many respondents revealed their personal perspectives on poverty:
"As a survivor of poverty, I know that the courage, intelligence and humour of people living in poverty are unrecognized."

"[Governments] need to acknowledge how their own policies contribute to higher rates of poverty."

"When I was on welfare, I was led to believe that if I got a good job I would be financially fine. But I am no better off. Now my rent is $300 higher, I pay for my own medications ($150/month), I make too much money for many of the [social] programs...."

"My father was disabled. My mother worked as a housekeeper. I went with her to apply for mother's allowance and I will never forget how humiliating it was. Thanks to a free education, I was able to go to school and become a professional, which is why I am absolutely convinced that it is necessary to maintain universal public services."

"Don't make us choose youth over the disabled or the elderly. Every Canadian is worthy of support."

The way forward for Canada

When we started looking into anti-poverty strategies, it quickly became apparent that without a long-term vision, an action plan, accountability for carrying out the plan, resources assigned to it, and accepted measurement of results, Canada will continue to be mired in poverty for generations.

The NCW is confident that the cornerstones identified below can provide the foundation for lasting solutions to poverty in Canada.

Four Cornerstones:

1) A national anti-poverty strategy with a long-term vision and measurable targets and timelines

Because Canada has a federal system, solving poverty requires a national strategy and a leadership role for the federal government. Canadians could select a comparative target – for example, to have the lowest poverty rate among the G-8 or OECD countries – or a specific target, such as cutting the rate in half within 10 years. There could be progressive short, medium and long-term targets, as well as targets for particular segments of the population that are most at risk.

2) A plan of action and a budget to coordinate initiatives within and across governments and with other partners

In Canada, this means that federal, provincial/territorial, municipal and Aboriginal governments are all important players, as are agencies outside of government. All must work towards common objectives and provide appropriate human and financial resources to implement the action plan. Mechanisms will be essential to ensure coordination and cooperation among government departments and ministries. And in a comprehensive plan, a focus on factors such as gender, racism, illness and injury that put some Canadians at greater risk of poverty may be needed.

3) A government accountability structure for ensuring results and for consulting Canadians on the design, implementation and evaluation of the actions that will affect them

Accountability can take many forms – legislation, ministerial responsibility for the strategy, public reporting on meeting targets and timelines, specific policy and program targets, and measures tied to goals, or an independent oversight agency.

4) A set of agreed poverty indicators that will be used to plan, monitor change, and assess progress

What Canadians decide to place in that core set of indicators will depend on the targets and priorities of a national strategy. It will likely be necessary to have multiple measures so that different dimensions of poverty can be tracked, such as deprivation, social exclusion and inequality.

The National Council of Welfare urges the establishment of a made-in-Canada national anti-poverty strategy as one of the most important initiatives the federal government could undertake.

Canadians will support it – they value fairness, they want their country to continue to prosper, and they believe that poverty and inequality can be reduced. All our governments should be encouraged by that confidence and should take up the challenge. Canadians will welcome it – and our future depends on it.

Sheila Regehr is Director of the National Council of Welfare.

This article was adapted from Solving Poverty: Four Cornerstones of a Workable National Strategy for Canada, *Volume 126, Winter 2007, published by the National Council of Welfare. Copies of the report and a Solving Poverty Information Kit can be downloaded from the NCW website at www.ncwcnbes.net, or obtained by calling 613-957-2961 or e-mailing ncw@magi.com. A new addition to the kit – a fact sheet on municipal-level anti-poverty strategies – is forthcoming.*

Newfoundland and Labrador's Action Plan to Reduce Poverty

By Minister Shawn Skinner and Aisling Gogan

In its 2005 *Speech from the Throne* and Budget, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador committed to develop and implement a comprehensive, integrated and government-wide Poverty Reduction Strategy that would transform Newfoundland and Labrador into a province with the least poverty over a 10-year period.

And in June 2006, the provincial government adopted an initial four-year action plan to reduce and ultimately eliminate poverty in the province.
(see http://www.hrle.gov.nl.ca/hrle/poverty/poverty-reduction-strategy.pdf)

Guiding principles were established and five broad goals identified – improved access and coordination of services for those with low incomes; a stronger social safety net; improved earned incomes; increased emphasis on early childhood development; and a better educated population. For each goal, "medium-term objectives" were established, to be measured after four years, and action areas identified for the first two years of the strategy.

1. The goals identified for the *Action Plan* are very comprehensive and go beyond strict income measures.
   How did you go about collecting advice for the design of this Action Plan? What groups did you consult? And how were all those different suggestions incorporated into the final Plan?

   Aisling Gogan: The *Action Plan* is the result of fairly extensive consultations that took place throughout Newfoundland and Labrador in 2005 and early 2006. Those consultations included community-based service providers and advocacy groups, business and labour, and individuals living in or vulnerable to poverty.

   Another important part of the process was what these different groups and individuals had been telling Government through earlier consultation processes and mechanisms. For example, our annual pre-budget consultations, various departmental consultations, and the regional labour market information workshops in Fall 2005 all provided advice and input. Other mechanisms used to gather information included the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Youth Advisory Committee and the Housing Policy Working Group. We also took advantage of the experience and knowledge of our own frontline workers within the public service.

   As part of our research, we looked at the work done in Quebec and in other countries, work by academics and think tank studies, and other best practice literature to ensure that we took advantage of what others had already learned. A consistent message was that a broad approach is essential – one which includes a social inclusion lens and considers the root causes of poverty – as well as a long-term approach that aims to not only reduce and alleviate poverty, but to prevent it as well. The literature also indicates that to assess progress for this kind of broad approach, a broad range of measures is required. There were differing views in terms of top priorities, specific ways to address particular issues, and the best overall measures of poverty, but there was general agreement on the importance of a broad definition of poverty and the need for a variety of measures.

   In Newfoundland and Labrador, we've focused on taking an evidence-based approach. Using all the information and research we have, we're making the best

investments possible to meet our goals. Recognizing that poverty cannot be solved overnight, or through any one policy change or initiative, we have focused on investments that will make the most difference and will add value to the many programs, services and benefits already in place. So in addition to the over $90 million invested in new initiatives, we have also tried to improve what we are already doing and in particular, improve the coordination among our programs and services. This has meant, for example, such things as simplifying the way in which Income Support clients report employment earnings, adding protection from discrimination based on source of income to our *Human Rights Code*, and improving the coordination of services offered between departments, so that when a patient without housing is released from hospital, there is a plan in place, in advance, to ensure that they are adequately housed on discharge.

2. It has been two years since the *Action Plan* was introduced, so you're at the half-way mark with some of the objectives identified. Are there any changes or improvements that have been measurable so far?

   Aisling Gogan: Yes, we are starting to be able to measure successes in specific areas. For example, our overall Income Support caseload has been going down consistently, with a decrease of 6.3% in 2007/08 compared to 2006/07. More importantly, with the package of initiatives aimed at removing work barriers for Income Support clients, the number of Income Support clients starting a new job has grown by almost 40% per month over this same period. There are other areas where we are also seeing positive changes, such as reduced costs for families with school-aged children and supports for families with infants and preschoolers.

   It's still too early to measure the impact of many of our initiatives, and in terms of preventing poverty, it will be a generation before we see the full impact. In the meantime, however, we are focusing on measuring steps along the way. For example, improving our educational outcomes, particularly for vulnerable groups, is something we can measure on an ongoing basis. Alleviation measures are easier – we know they have been implemented and we can track whether they are meeting their intended targets.

3. With an initiative as complex and multi-faceted as the Action Plan, there are bound to be elements that need to be adjusted over time, as you gain experience. With the monitoring and reporting that has been done to date, what aspects of the Plan will need to be adjusted or revised?

   Minister Skinner: One of our five main goals is "improved access and coordination of services for those with low income." During the 2005 consultations, this was a common theme identified by many of our stakeholders. In both the research to determine who is accessing the existing programs and as we have developed new programs, program take-up has been repeatedly highlighted as an area of concern. We recognize that there are complex reasons why people do not access government programs and services for which they are eligible and which advocates and individuals living in poverty have indicated would be of particular benefit. We are working on ways to address this challenge. In the coming year, we will be working on this issue, including consulting with our community partners on how they might be able to help us address issues of awareness and access.

4. In January 2008, the government announced a review of the province's minimum wage rate. It seems logical that a higher minimum wage would help reduce poverty. Is this review part of the Action Plan? If so, how will those consultations be incorporated into it? And how important a role does the minimum wage play in the Plan?

   Minister Skinner: Under the goal of "improved earned incomes," our *Action Plan* commits to "undertake policy development related to wages and benefits, including ongoing research on minimum wages to keep mandatory rates on par with the rest of Atlantic Canada." In 2007, as part of its re-election commitment, our Government indicated that we would "plan for future increases in the minimum wage in a predictable and incremental manner by undertaking consultations in 2008 to provide stakeholders with a meaningful opportunity for input and the

time necessary to prepare for increases, with a view to achieving a minimum hourly wage of $10 by 2010." These consultations took place in January and February of this year, and in them, I heard stakeholders' views on the minimum wage as a poverty-reduction tool.

Through the Poverty Reduction Strategy, I have endorsed an integrated policy mix to address poverty and I consider minimum wage as one of the elements of that policy mix. While it is an important element, increasing the minimum wage alone will not solve poverty, even among "the working poor." Other key elements for those who work for low wages include decreasing their costs through initiatives such as providing prescription drug and dental coverage, reducing the costs of K–12 education born by parents and the tuition and loan costs for post-secondary students, and low-income tax reduction, as well as by ensuring that quality, affordable childcare is available. Our Government has also been looking at income supplementation models, and several pilot projects for single parents are up and running.

5. What was the biggest thing you learned from the development of this initiative, or what surprised you the most? And are there lessons learned from Newfoundland and Labrador's experience that might benefit other jurisdictions that are considering poverty-reduction strategies?

Aisling Gogan: One thing I've learned is just how great the challenge is of measuring the combined impacts of our own programs and services and those offered by the federal government. Trying to understand fully what the changes will mean – particularly for our most vulnerable citizens – is extremely difficult, yet it is critical to the success of making a lasting difference. The need to assess marginal effective tax rates and their impact on eligibility for services, while keeping in mind the family context, underscores the importance of bringing the right mix of players to the table when developing and interpreting different models.

The need for a collaborative process is also critical, both within government and with external partners. Poverty is such a complex issue that any meaningful and effective solutions must involve all the key players.

In terms of lessons learned, it's clear that leadership is really important. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Ministerial Committee that oversees the poverty reduction strategy – and which includes nine Minsters – has been a crucial element of success. Given the way that departments are traditionally structured and the accountability requirements around those structures, it is a real challenge for governments to undertake truly horizontal policy development. And in order to make that happen, it must be a clearly articulated priority for the government, and strong leadership and dedicated resources are necessary. The Ministers here have been clear about what they expect from their departments; without that, we would not have been able to bring about the policy changes and collaborative work that has been accomplished to date.

Another essential lesson learned has been that while it is important to be able to measure progress, measurement is extremely challenging so it is important not to get caught up in trying to find the 'perfect' measure – there simply isn't one. Historically in Canada, measurement issues have been the focus of most poverty discussions by governments, rather than a focus on the underlying issues or discussions about how to address the root causes of poverty. So in Newfoundland and Labrador, we are moving forward with a variety of measures, while recognizing that they all have flaws and shortcomings. We will continue to work on improving our measures, but we will also act on the best evidence available, in order to make a difference in the lives of those living in poverty.

The Honourable Shawn Skinner is Minister of Human Resources, Labour and Employment for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and he is the lead Minister for the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Aisling Gogan is Director of the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Quebec's Law Against Poverty and Social Exclusion

This is an excerpt from an interview with Alain Noël, a professor of political science at the University of Montréal, and president of the Centre d'étude sur la pauvreté et l'exclusion (CEPE, Gouvernement du Québec). He spoke recently with CCSD President Marcel Lauzière about Quebec's approach to anti-poverty.

Q: How did Quebec's provincial anti-poverty policy come about?

A: The Quebec government adopted a law against poverty and social exclusion in 2002. This law had first been promoted by a collective of groups and associations which was born out of earlier fights over social assistance reforms and poverty. In 1995, there was the Bread and Roses March of women dealing with poverty. There were also a series of discussions with social groups about fighting the deficit in Quebec and they used the occasion to say, 'We accept the idea of eliminating the deficit but in exchange, we must have a say in what's going to be done.'

So there were a number of events that brought the issue of poverty to the forefront, and the law was adopted in 2002. But then there was a provincial election and we weren't sure whether the new Liberal government would be committed to pursue what was necessary, given the law. It took a while, but eventually an action plan was designed, new institutions created, and a consultative committee and a more scientific committee were established to follow up developments.

The government now reports each year on what measures have been taken and the progress made. It is still just the beginning of the process, but what is certainly clear is that poverty has become an important issue on the public agenda – an issue that the government has to take into account and report on and present results. So that's the political process.

Now, you might say, 'Well, it's nice to pass laws and create institutions, but how does that improve the life of poor people?' If you look at recent data on income distribution, you can see that poverty (as measured by the conventional Canadian measures) has gone down in Quebec, especially among families with children. Of course some of this improvement is the result of economic growth and high employment levels, as everywhere in Canada, but there has been more progress made on poverty in Quebec than in Ontario, for instance. This suggests that it's more than just economic growth: effective public policies were needed and especially, public policies aimed at families.

Single people without children tend to be the forgotten group in the fight against poverty. They are often overlooked and usually less well-off. So a process was created and some positive results have been obtained – in part, because of economic growth and in part, because of public policy.

It's important to remember that this law against poverty and social exclusion was not first initiated by the Quebec government; it didn't even come from experts on social policy. The policy experts weren't against it, but they looked on while the train was passing; they were discreet because they weren't too sure what to do.

The Quebec law against poverty actually came about as a result of the social actors

– grassroots organizations, and not even the most established ones. Trade unions and other associations then jumped on board, but it was really a new arrangement of groups that came up with the idea for a law and promoted it.

This not only created a new law, it also generated pride in people who were living in impoverished situations. They would come up to the microphone at meetings and say, 'I may live in poverty, but I have rights, too. I have a right to say what I think. I have ideas. I have an experience that is worth discussing. I *know* what it's to live in poverty. You don't know what it is, but I can tell you.'

So it created a sense of ownership. Further, the law also connected the fate of people on social assistance with the fate of people at the bottom of the labour market. They are often the same people, but they tend to be seen as different people. So this approach has had a very positive effect on social cohesion among people with low incomes.

Q: How is Quebec's anti-poverty approach distinct from other anti-poverty policies in Canada and from international models?

A: What is very interesting about the poverty issue as it is emerging in Canada now is that many provinces are talking about different ways of addressing poverty – first in Quebec, then in Newfoundland and Labrador, and efforts in Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Manitoba. It's interesting that this impetus is not coming from the federal government; it's coming from the provinces. Each province does it its own way, but at the same time there is very good potential for collaboration, for emulation, to look at how innovations in one province could be used to improve what another province does, without thinking that there has to be only one way of approaching the issue. Using the potential that we have in the Canadian federation, there are opportunities to generate innovations and different ways of doing things.

A good source of inspiration for this can be found in the European Union. In Europe, the different countries have agreed to coordinate on poverty reduction, and they do so with very different welfare systems – much greater differences than what we have in Canada. But the EU countries have agreed to set common goals and to compare how they do, without trying to fit everything into a single model because they're too different. We can be inspired by this and see that it's possible for each province to go its own way, but at the same time to collaborate with each other and exchange information, share indicators, possibly communicate and exchange methods, and so on.

Q: How well-established is the anti-poverty strategy in Quebec? Has it become a non-partisan issue, like Quebec's child care program?

A: As with everything, there is both a partisan dimension and a consensus dimension. I think the general framework is going to last. But each successive government will put more or less emphasis and more or less effort into it, depending on the circumstances. So the standard left-right debate will apply. But there also is a cross-partisan dimension to this now that it is anchored in institutions. Public opinion surveys also show that there is strong support for policies against poverty, so in that sense, it has become cross-partisan.

Q: Increasingly, it seems as if governments and community organizations are realizing that something needs to be done about anti-poverty strategies. Why do you think this is happening and do you think it's achievable?

A: When the Quebec law against poverty and social exclusion was first discussed, one member of the National Assembly said that adopting a law against poverty would be like adopting a law against rain – poverty is something that has always been around and is always going to be there; it's a fact of life. But what the new parliamentary agenda shows us is that poverty is *not* a fact of life, it's not a necessity of nature.

It's in the anti-poverty law that the Quebec government compares the province to other jurisdictions in Canada and to other countries in the world. And when you look at different countries around the world, you can see that there is much less poverty in some countries of equivalent wealth and development, and in

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Why is it so tough to get ahead?

Synthesis of report by John Stapleton, Metcalf Foundation, Nov 2007

> "We cannot claim to have people-centred government policies. Not when an 18-year-old lone parent refugee is considered to be an adult under four policies, a child under two, a student under a third policy, a dependent adult under two others, a non-resident under two, and a legal resident of Canada under four more. And as far as government is concerned, it's her job to sort all this out." p.11

Life is tough for poor people – we know that. So why do we develop public policies that make it even tougher?

Working-age social assistance recipients in Ontario live with disincentives, especially those who are residents of public housing. The more they earn, the more they lose in benefits; when they tell the truth, they are penalized.

Programs within the social assistance and housing systems work in isolation from each other. When people start to earn, the various benefit systems often take back more than they leave behind, giving people little or no incentive to work or become more self-reliant.

The problems get worse when children in the family turn 18. If they move out, they must work rather than get a higher education. If they stay home, the family's benefits go down anyway, and the family's rent goes up because there is deemed to be another earning "adult" in the family unit.

Newcomers to Canada often spend long periods on social assistance and in programs such as public housing. Living costs are high, particularly in large urban centres, and low-waged jobs make it difficult to maintain a decent living. Finding work at a living wage is also a problem for disadvantaged youth, for foster children aging out of state care, and for other poor, non-immigrant Canadians.

In a November 2007 report released by the Metcalf Foundation, author John Stapleton examined the interconnected social policy rules that seem to punish disadvantaged children during their transtion from adolescence to adulthood. He calls it a "pathologizing transition" because it makes getting ahead so hard. And it happens when the rules of social programs, taken as a whole, accomplish the opposite of their stated intent.

Stapleton worked with members of St. Christopher House in Toronto and the Somali Community Centre of Etobicoke to help identify practical ways to remove barriers to self-sufficiency for people receiving multiple social programs or subsidies. The main focus was on adults living in public housing who received Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Supports and other subsidies, as well as their adult children who applied for or received OSAP, Millennium scholarships and school-based bursaries.

How society views welfare

Welfare programs are unpopular with the public and equally unpopular with welfare recipients.[1,2]

In Ontario, the cost of welfare makes up just 5% of all income security payments paid to people in the province. Stapleton finds it odd that our most negative attitudes are directed at such a small portion of our income security budget.

Under the old Canada Assistance Plan, persons with disabilities and lone parents were considered to be effectively outside the labour market. But these days, most working-age adults who receive welfare believe they have the potential to enter the labour market. Stapleton sees this change in attitudes as a compelling reason to restructure the social assistance system, with a goal of truly supporting the transition to self-reliance at a realistic, client-centred pace.

How we make it tough for adults to do better

According to Stapleton, all of our social benefits programs have understandable rules when looked at in isolation. It is through their interaction that they reduce or eliminate incentives to becoming more self-reliant.

For example, when a person on social assistance begins to work, each of the programs from which they receive benefits begins to take some money back. One program might take 50 cents back on every dollar earned, while the next takes 30 cents, and the next, 25 cents. Before long, the programs combined can take back more than 100 cents of every dollar earned.

Then payroll deductions come into play. People must pay income tax, Employment Insurance, and Canada Pension Plan premiums on every earned dollar. When these payroll deductions combine with the reductions on welfare, the total "tax" on this working person can add up to more than 100% of the earned dollar.

Economists call these reductions, taxes, and premiums on the earned dollar the "Marginal Effective Tax Rate," or METR. The rate is usually highest among poor people who receive benefits from more than one social service or income-tested program but who are also trying to better themselves through modest earnings. What it means, in effect, is that poor working people return relatively more money to the state than more affluent workers do, because they give up so many benefits in order to work.[3]

A budgeting exercise done with women from the Somali community living in public housing revealed that the single parents on social assistance had as much disposable income as a woman who had obtained a counselling job that paid $36,400 a year, because the counsellor's rent soared from about $300 to a market rate of $1,200 per month. In roundtable discussions, people on social assistance said they must live day-to-day, because any improvement in their financial circumstances would have an impact on all the benefits they received and could trigger an immediate rent increase.

How we make it tough for children to grow out of poverty

In Canada today, children often stay in the family home beyond age 18. Many do so while they pursue further education and training; others live at home while they gain work experience, pay off student loans, or save for their own place. In middle-class society, adulthood is often measured by a person's readiness to be independent of the family, usually after their formal education has ended and their working income is stable.

It is very different for children in families on social assistance.

When they reach 18, they are no longer considered children. They stop receiving social assistance as part of the family, and can apply for assistance in their own right but only if they are no longer dependent on the family. In most cases, that means they must move out of the family home.

A similar definition of adulthood is used in the provision of public housing for families. Once a young person turns 18 and moves out, the "rental unit" (their home) may be deemed too large, and the family can be evicted if the size of the rental unit does not conform to the size of the "benefit unit" (the family). Any income the young person receives from student loans, grants or scholarships can also trigger a reduction in social assistance benefits and impact rental charges.

Stapleton says these social policies are misdirected and effectively perpetuate poverty and dependence into the next generation. They force under-educated 18-year-olds into the working world and out of the family home, putting them at risk for homelessness.

So how can we support a healthy transition to self-reliance?

Stapleton says there is no such thing as "making the leap" to self-sufficiency in our current welfare paradigm. Instead, the system forces a long and arduous climb up the welfare wall, with no foreseeable economic improvement during that climb.

His report offers practical suggestions to eliminate some of the barriers caused by multiple subsidies and program policies, but he warns that we cannot get to the heart of the problem as long as the programs act in isolation from one another.

The report's longer-term recommendations seek to mirror the income security policy framework for seniors and children. Programs for working-age adults should stress the transition to self-sufficiency as an important goal, rather than just ensuring that only those in real need are supported. It is a journey that government departments will have to take together, he says, not in isolation from one another, but by doing so, we may be able to establish new types of programs that could replace welfare entirely.

Short-term recommendations:

1. Reduce Marginal Effective Tax Rates for adults with low incomes, for example, by ensuring that METR do not exceed 75% of net earned income, by allowing the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) to be passed through to eligible Ontario Works recipients without penalty, and by assessing no additional rent payments as a result of the receipt of OCB.
2. Stabilize households in transtion to greater self-reliance, for example, by establishing a planning system for adults with an approval process, standards and benchmarks, and by raising asset limits for financing employment start-up activites;
3. Support children in their transition to adulthood, for example by establishing a 4-year moratorium on rent increases, Ontario Works reductions and losses in child care subsidies to families while a student completes their post-secondary education

Longer-term recommendations:

1. Create a new government responsibility centre to resolve the barriers that create unintended consequences due to program overlap and duplication;
2. Question the "business model" of governance that champions running programs like separate businesses in isolation from other programs. The goal of this exercise would be to create a new set of governance principles in consultation with "civil society, agencies and activists."
3. Re-orient Ontario Works from a welfare program to support transition to self-reliance;
4. Publicly champion the road to self-reliance.

Stapleton knows these recommendations are ambitious because they will require an inclusive and integrated initiative involving all levels of government, many internal departments, and a number of social agencies. In the next steps, the report's findings will be presented to participants of the reference and focus groups for their reactions and reviewed by key informants. A consultation process will be developed with community groups and other stakeholders to consider the recommendations and revise as necessary.

The ultimate goal of this project is to call attention to the need for a new governance model – one that enables governments and their agencies to forge policies and procedures in a co-ordinated way. Stapleton says it is the key to reducing disincentives and rewarding, rather than pathologizing, the transition to greater self-reliance.

John Stapleton worked for the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services for 28 years in the areas of social assistance policy and operations. Since leaving government in 2002, he has lent his expertise to many organizations, including serving as a Social Policy Fellow with St. Christopher House in Toronto and as the research director for the Task Force on Modernizing Income Security for Working Age Adults. In 2006, he was awarded a Metcalf Innovation Fellowship.

To read the full report, Why is it so tough to get ahead? How our tangled social programs pathologize the transtition to self-reliance, *go to http://www.metcalffoundation.com/.*

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1 See: < http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dabrent/cbc/poll.html> and similar results.

2 See Part 8 of the report: Talking with Community Members.

3 For a full discussion of these dynamics, see Gillian Manning and Don Drummond: "The Road Still Less Traveled," Toronto Dominion Bank, TD Economics, September 2005.

Using social data for success

By Alanna Petroff

When the federal government granted more than one billion dollars to expand child care programs in Ontario, community partners in Peel kicked into high gear.

The 2005 funding from the Best Start program was a boon for the Region of Peel, giving the community a lump sum to create more child care centres and expand early education programs. But there was a tight deadline; organizers had only a few months to determine where to place the new facilities.

Using information from the Community Social Data Strategy (CSDS), the regional partners were able to identify areas with the greatest demand for child care services – and then take action.

"Given those tight timelines, we could not have done it without the CSDS data," said Sarah Cannon, a data analyst with the Peel Region. "The data gave the partners confidence to make such an important funding decision."

Cannon analyzed and organized the CSDS data "from dusk 'til dawn" so that the proposal deadline would be met. She worked with the organization Success by 6 Peel – a coalition of community partners working in education, recreation and social services – to help ensure the funding proposal best served the community's needs.

Success by 6 Peel includes more than 40 community partners, all working to provide children in the region with effective, early childhood education and support. Their goal is summed up in the slogan: "In Peel, all children will thrive." It was this organization that took on the responsibility of managing the funding.

Success by 6 Peel used the community-level data from CSDS to map out the high-need areas, those likely requiring the most funding. And while many people working on the proposal could *guess* which areas these were, CSDS data provided the concrete evidence to substantiate their assessments.

"If we had not used the CSDS data, it wouldn't have been as clear where these facilities should go," said Elena DiBattista, director of Success by 6 Peel. "But with the data, it was very clear. So people who worked on this project were very united … It made the process more manageable and logical, and evidence-based."

Cannon used CSDS data to identify areas in the community with the greatest need for child services. The most important were statistics indicating the number of young children per square kilometre, because areas with the highest density of children would have the greatest need for child-related facilities. She then supplemented these data with statistics on the number of children living in low-income and single-parent families, the number of recent immigrants as a

The **Community Social Data Strategy (CSDS)** is a national network of networks, or consortia, that provide a gateway through which municipalities and community-based social service and planning organizations can access city-level data from Statistics Canada and other sources. Local CSDS consortia typically consist of the municipality, health and social service agencies, social planning councils and school boards, in addition to police services, public libraries and non-governmental organizations such as the United Way.

CSDS works to enhance the capacity of these local networks to access social data and use them effectively in their work. By better understanding community social and economic trends, CSDS partners have the expertise necessary to improve local policy and program development in their city.

For more information about how you can get involved with the Community Social Data Strategy, go to **http://www.ccsd.ca/subsites/socialdata/home.html.**

percentage of the population, and statistics on the proportion of the community without knowledge of either English or French.

Cannon also calculated the proportion of the region's population aged 20 and older with less than a Grade 9 education. This statistic was important, Cannon said, because it identified those areas where problems could arise. If, for example, parents themselves did not have enough schooling, they might have difficulty fostering sufficient intellectual growth and learning in their children.

Cannon was able to plot and colour-code the information onto regional maps, visually demonstrating which locations had the greatest need. For example, where a high-density zone overlapped with one having proportionally more recent immigrants or single-parent families, community partners could immediately identify those communities that would benefit most from additional child care resources.

Ultimately, five new child care centres were created with the Best Start money. Each was integrated into an existing school or housed in a newly-built addition. The last centre is slated to open in September 2008

And the reaction from parents? "Absolutely thrilled," says DiBattista.

Over and above these five new centres, Success by 6 Peel will use some of the funding to establish two mobile child development centres. Once on the road, these mobile units will target high-growth areas in the region that are generally under-serviced. They will park at fire stations or in school parking lots, for example, so that parents and children can simply climb aboard to access a variety of literacy and childhood education programming.

By using the CSDS data to provide detailed and accurate information, the Peel partnership was able to make well-informed decisions – despite tight deadlines – that allowed them to use the Best Start funding effectively. In the end, the data helped Success by 6 reach its ultimate goal – ensuring that all children in Peel do indeed thrive.

Alanna Petroff is a freelance journalist specializing in business and arts reporting. She is a graduate of Carleton University with a Bachelor of Journalism and Art History and she currently works at the Business News Network (BNN) in Toronto.

Quebec's Law Against Poverty

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other countries, there is more poverty. You can also see that some countries have made improvements, while others have seen poverty increase.

From this, you can see that the way a society is organized makes a difference: you *can* improve from where you began. Putting poverty on the public agenda transforms it from a 'natural fact' to a social fact – something that we can do something about. It's very important that this message be conveyed and that we see which actions work best. We may not be too sure yet what is the best way to take, but we now know that we *can* do something.

Q: How do you think governments and community-based organizations will be able to maintain public support for an anti-poverty strategy over the long-term?

A: It's difficult, because dealing with poverty requires relatively long-term efforts. That may not be very appealing to politicians, because the results will only appear in the long run and politicians are likely to be facing an election in the short run. They may pay lip-service to anti-poverty strategies, but they are less likely to see this as an attractive area in which to intervene.

Instead what has to happen is for social actors and organizations to focus on specific issues and policies. In Quebec, the law provides a framework for social actors to organize interventions and to think ahead. In the very early discussions about poverty, one of the triggers was that social activists found it discouraging to fight for social assistance standards that they didn't think were any good. They were fighting a sort of rearguard battle to avoid cuts and avoid lowering the standards. Instead, they wanted a more positive objective to guide their different interventions, and that's what the law – and the framework that comes with it – provides to social actors. It gives a vision, a framework and a long-term perspective to anti-poverty efforts.

Of course, it's an uphill battle because it's never going to be easy to reduce poverty across generations. It takes time. But at least the vision is there.

What's on your bookshelf?

We asked:
"Is there a book that has made a difference in how you approach your work? Is there an author who has helped focus your ideas or presented an idea that inspired you?"

And you answered.
Here are just some of the books that are making a difference to people working in community and social development.

I have a big bookshelf, but five volumes that come to mind:

- *American Backlash*, by Michael Adams. It captures a worrisome trend where fewer citizens "act in community" and more pursue aggressive strategies of self-interest and survival. Although the data are American, similar trends are emerging in Canada, so it encourages people to reflect on what *is* the modern social contract in Canada.
- *Shared Space: The Communities Agenda*, by Sherri Torjman. It is exciting to have this trail-breaking examination of what is happening in Canadian communities, and the notion of "resilience" is a great way to understand community development.
- *The Cathedral Within*, by Bill Shore. It is inspirational and reminds people why we need to commit to something for the long haul if we want to make a difference on big social projects.
- *Smart Communities*, by Suzanne Morse. One of the most straightforward and accessible reads about how communities can organize to make a difference.
- *Communities on the Way*, by Stewart Perry. It provides a good picture of the earlier community development movements in Canada and reminds us of where we have come from.

Submitted by: Liz Huff, Director, Community Approaches and Initiatives Division, HRSDC, Ottawa

At the risk of dating myself, these are resources I still use every year:

- *The Rich get Richer & The Poor Write Proposals*, by Nancy Mitiguy, Citizen Involvement Training Project, 1978.
- *Enjoying Research? A How To Manual on Needs Assessment*, Ministry of Tourism & Recreation, 1982.
- various articles by from John McKnight, for inspiration

Submitted by: Michelle Knoll, Executive Director, Oak Park Moms & Tots, Oakville, ON

A valuable resource to us has been:

- *Tea You Could Trot a Mouse On – The Elements of Community-based Economic Development*, by Barbara J. Parker.

Submitted by: Bernice Hancock, Program Director, Family Resource Program, Community Action Committee for Southwestern Newfoundland

Here is several books which I've found important:

- *Dark Age Ahead*, by Jane Jacobs. She argues that five pillars of society (community and family, higher education, science and technology, government representation and self-regulation of learned professions) are becoming irrelevant, with dire consequences.
- *A Short History of Progess*, by Ronald Wright. Shows that our modern predicatment is as old as civilization. We must understand the patterns of progress and disaster if we are to reshape the outcomes.
- *Civic Literacy*, by Henry Milner. Shows the links between a more literate society and greater civic participation due to better understanding of public issues.
- *Happiness*, by Richard Layard. Shows why GDP is a poor measure of social well-being.
- *The Impact of Inequality*, by Richard Wilkinson. Documents the relationship between social inequality and poor social outcomes.

Submitted by: Nayda Veeman, Retired adult educator, PhD., Saskatoon

Sadly, this book is out of print:

- *Involving Citizens in Community Decision Making: A Guidebook*, by James L. Creighton (Washington, D.C.: Program for Community Problem Solving, National Civic League, 1992). Although I've used many other books and materials over the past 17 years, in my view, this is the best for planning and implementing participation processes. (In fact, I wish the National Civic League would re-publish it so I could replace my copy which is held together with tape and rubber bands.)

Submitted by: Vickie Jo Morris, Senior Social Planner, Vancouver

There are three books that I would recommend:

- *Awakening the Workplace: Achieving Connection, Fulfillment and Success at Work*, edited by Adele Alfano and Kathy Glover Scott. This book offers the collective experience and knowledge of 16 well-respected coaches and consultants from across North America. It provides insights for individuals and for Supervisors/Managers to share with staff on re-gaining enthusiasm for work, building a positive work-life balance, providing inspiring leadership, etc.
- *ADKAR: A Model for Change in Business, Government and Our Community*, by Jeffrey M. Hiatt. ADKAR = Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement. This book provides a working model for implementing successful change in personal lives and in professional careers. It is extremely relevant for working with staff to move changes forward – a change management methodology that is practical and easy to implement.
- *Team Leader's Problem Solver*, by Clay Carr. This very practical book provides strategies for common and not-so-common management problems that can arise in the workplace and challenge team leaders. The easy-to-follow format makes this book extremely practical. Each problem is followed by a potential scenario, possible causes, potential strategies for solutions, and ends with a team strengthener.

Submitted by: Donna E. Palmer, Acting Manager, Best Start Integration, Region of Peel, Children's Services

Il me fiat plaisir de répondre à cette initiative que je trouve fort intéressante. J'ai à l'esprit quelques ouvragres qui contiennent des idées très précieuses mais il y en un précisément que j'ai souvent à mon chevet:

- *Involving the Community - A guide to participatory development communication*, par Guy Bessette, Internationational Development Research Center, 2004. Il s'agit d'un ouvrage qui combien parfaitement les approches théoriques et les applications pratiques du concept de participation communautaire. On peut donc l'utiliser aussi bien pour réviser ses apprentissages universitaires qu'à titre de manuel pratique pour mettre en place des initiatives de développement communautaire. Les différentes idées pour impliquer réellement les communautés dans le processus de prise de décision au lieu de solliciter juste leur participation à des rencontres me paraissent très intéressantes et assez simples à mettre en place.

Submitted by: Amadou Lamine, Conseiller en développement communautaire, CISSÉ, Montréal

Il y a quelques oeuvres que j'apprécie particulièrement et qui ont fait une différence dans mon approche à mon travail. Il y a quelques titres que je soulève qui sont de petits trésors pour la communication tels que :

- *Affirmez-vous* de la série S.O.S Boulot de Alain Samson, Les Éditions transcontinental inc., 2004
- *La communication interpersonnelle* de Joseph DeVito et al, Éditions du Renouveau pédagogique inc., 2001
- *Communication et interactions* de Ronald Adler et Neil Towne 3e édition
- Comme sources d'inspiration, j'ai été fort impressionnée par le petit livre *Opening the Invitation* de Oriah Mountain Dreamer et du recueil intitulé *Child Honoring How to Turn This World Around* de Raffi Cavoukian et Sharna Olfman (Éditeurs).

Submitted by: Dominique Arbez, Professeure, Éducation de la jeune enfance, École technique et professionnelle, Manitoba

RESOURCE:

Economic Well-being of Children in North America

Regional integration has long been a reality in North America. These links were strengthened with the adoption of the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement, and increased integration continues to be promoted for Canada's long-term economic interests. But where do North American children stand economically? Are *they* making progress? How are changing demographic, labour market, and government trends influencing the well-being of young people in Canada, the United States and Mexico? And are there similarities in the experiences of children from the three countries, particularly in light of this growing economic integration?

The next report in the *Children in North America* series – to be released in Spring 2008 – examines the economic security of young people in Canada, the United States and Mexico. The report looks at indicators of social and demographic trends, examines labour markets and levels of family income, and the scope of public resources available for families with children.

The findings confirm tremendous disparities in the economic well-being of North American children – both *among* and *within* the countries. And while the majority of children in Canada and the United States enjoy a level of economic security that is not available to millions of Mexican children, the pattern of income inequality was common in each country. As each of the three national economies recovered from economic crises in the 1990s, families at the top of the income ladder continued to advance, while incomes of families at the bottom stagnated or lost ground.

Other findings from this study include:

- Rates of poverty among children in North America are high compared to those in other developed countries.
- The child poverty gap closed slightly in Canada and Mexico. However, in the United States, the gap between the average incomes of poor families with children and the poverty line widened.
- Food insecurity remains a problem across the continent, particularly in Mexico where one in five households lacks the resources needed to purchase a healthy diet for their families.
- Access to health care is a critical issue for children in the United States and Mexico. Many are forced to go without health care because of low family incomes.
- Housing affordability is a significant factor in high poverty rates in Canada and the United States. In Mexico, concerns have revolved around basic housing conditions, but in this regard, the 1990s marked an improvement for Mexican families with children.
- In all three countries, the education level among mothers and fathers has been increasing; however, the overwhelming majority of Mexican children continue to live in households with parents who have low levels of education.
- Employment growth was strong across the continent through the late 1990s, although rates have levelled off since then, particularly in the United States and Mexico. The majority of children – both poor and non-poor – live in families where there is at least one income earner.
- Canada and the United States have stronger income support systems for families with children than does Mexico. These types of supports are important in helping to protect children from poverty by mitigating the negative impacts of market developments.
- Canada's income support system for families is more effective in reducing levels of child poverty than income supports available in the United States or Mexico.

Drawing on a variety of national and international sources, the Children in North America project continues to document how children are faring in each country and across the continent; develops a baseline against which to measure and monitor their well-being over time; and builds capacity across the three nations to continue the important work of measuring and monitoring the well-being of children.

UPDATE:

CANADIAN SOCIAL FORUM

Calgary, Alberta – May 2009

Homelessness. Affordable housing. Food security. Neighbourhoods under stress. A growing gap between the rich and poor. Poverty.

While Canada's economy has been thriving for over a decade, daunting social challenges persist and many Canadians are being left behind. Why do these social problems continue in the midst of such prosperity – and what is being done to make meaningful change in these areas? Those and many other social development questions are at the core of the inaugural **Canadian Social Forum** which will take place May 19 to 22, 2009 in Calgary, Alberta.

"Alberta was a deliberate choice to inaugurate this Forum," says Marcel Lauzière, CCSD President. "It has a thriving economy and lots of creative community thinking, but problems persist and in some cases, are getting worse. This is an ideal backdrop to tackle these discussions and debates."

The Forum will take place over three days at the TELUS Centre in Calgary – only blocks away from the gritty downtown core. More than 700 decision and policy makers, researchers and community representatives will be joined by people working in law enforcement, public health and the corporate sector.

"It is a combination that has the potential to create some really good chemistry," says Lauzière. "There is an openness to create a new momentum in tackling social challenges."

Presenters and workshops are being chosen for their ability to get to the core of promising practices, organizational obstacles, and the realities of social and political issues.

"We are all looking for effective ways to work together," says Lauzière. "The sharing that will take place at the Forum can help make that happen."

Innovation and promising practices will be shared through workshops, roundtables and plenary sessions, with time set aside for informal networking over coffee and meals. But the Forum initiative is ongoing. It will connect networks both before and after the actual event. Participants won't have to wait until the next meeting to share questions, ideas or innovations with the people they meet.

Another highlight of the event will be the use of video.
Several plenary sessions will start with short documentaries to help kick-start the dialogue and debate. Organizers recently started production on the first of these in Alberta and Quebec.

Work has also begun on the Canadian Social Forum Video Initiative, where senior broadcast students from Canadian journalism schools will team up with professional television producers to chronicle the three-day Forum. They will document the ideas, messages and inspiration of Forum participants, to share with others during the event and later in communities across Canada.

Early-bird registration begins in **September 2008.** Information about bursaries and subsidies will be available at that time. Check the CCSD website at www.ccsd.ca for updates.

To find out more about this inaugural Canadian Social Forum, or to share your ideas and input about what you'd like to see at the Forum, send us an e-mail at forum@ccsd.ca.

Same Sex CPP Survivor's Pensions

NOTICE OF INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION REQUIRED
COURT ORDERED DEADLINE

ALL INDIVIDUALS WHOSE SAME SEX PARTNER CONTRIBUTED TO THE CANADA PENSION PLAN AND DIED AFTER APRIL 17, 1985 AND BEFORE JANUARY 1, 1998, ARE NOW ELIGIBLE TO MAKE A CLAIM FOR A CPP SURVIVOR'S PENSION PURSUANT TO THE SUPREME COURT OF CANADA'S RULING IN *HISLOP et al. v. CANADA*. THE INDIVIDUALS WHO BENEFIT FROM THIS RULING ARE DESCRIBED IN THIS NOTICE AS CLASS MEMBERS.

FAILURE ON THE PART OF ANY CLASS MEMBER TO TAKE STEPS TO CLAIM THEIR SURVIVOR'S PENSION BY SEPTEMBER 30, 2008, WILL RESULT IN THE CLASS MEMBER NOT BEING ELIGIBLE FOR THE FULL AMOUNT OF ARREARS ALLOWED UNDER THE SUPREME COURT OF CANADA'S JUDGMENT WITHOUT LEAVE OF THE COURT.

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT EACH CLASS MEMBER ENSURE THAT THEY HAVE MADE AN APPLICATION FOR THEIR SURVIVOR'S PENSION.

The common issues in the class proceeding Hislop et al. v Canada have been finally determined. Class members had been barred by statutory restrictions from claiming a survivor's pension because they were in same sex relationships. The Court's ruling struck down those restrictions under the Charter of Rights. As a result, class members are now entitled to claim a CPP survivor's pension on the same basis as survivors of opposite sex relationships.

What This Means to Class Members

Subject to the general eligibility criteria under the CPP, all Class Members are entitled to claim their Survivors' Pension retrospectively, at least to December 21, 2000, and prospectively through ongoing monthly payments.

How To Make A Claim

Each Class Member must file an application for their Survivor's Pension with the department of Human Resources and Social Development Canada ("HRSDC"). All applications are confidential. To obtain an application from HRSDC directly they can be reached at 1-800-311-3820 (In Canada); 1-613-990-2244 (Outside Canada); 1-800-255-4786 (T.T.Y./Teletypewriter Users Only) or visit their website at **www.servicecanada.gc.ca**.

What if I Already Applied or Made Multiple Applications

If you have already applied and are receiving your pension you do not need to reapply.

If you have recently applied for a survivor's pension and your application has been acknowledged but is still incomplete, you do not need to reapply. You need to provide the missing documents /information HRSDC requested.

If you are experiencing any difficulties with the processing of your application, you may contact class counsel as set out below for assistance.

If you have or had an appeal pending before the CPP Review Tribunal or the Pensions Appeal Board respecting your claim, you should advise HRSDC of the appeal. If you subsequently experience any difficulties with your pension claim, you may consult any lawyer who is representing you in connection with any such appeal or one of the class counsel listed below for assistance.

Am I Entitled to Arrears? (Back Payments)

All Class Members who are qualified for a survivor's pension are entitled to arrears back to December 21, 2000, regardless of whether they have made an application to date. However, if you did make an application for your Pension at any time prior to November 21, 2001, you may be entitled to additional payments back beyond December 21, 2000, but no earlier then August 1999.

It is important to note that regardless of the date of your application, once approved you will be entitled to your pension for the rest of your life.

I Am The Executor of a Same Sex Survivor Who Died Without Collecting A Survivor's Pension. Are the Estates of Same Sex Survivors Entitled to a Survivors Pension?

In the past, Survivors Pensions were not being paid to the surviving partner in same sex relationships. Some survivors died prior to the Supreme Court of Canada ruling without receiving their pension.

An Individual same sex survivor who was alive on October 2, 2003, but who subsequently died may still have their claim made by their executor.

There are some class members who survived their same sex partners but died prior to October 2, 2003. The Supreme Court has ruled that such class members are not entitled to have a claim made by their executor.

Normal CPP Rules Apply

Not all Canadians are entitled to a Survivor's Pension. There are rules that apply equally to opposite sex and same sex relationships that must be followed in order to obtain a Survivor's Pension. Some of the important rules are as follows:

(1) the survivor, at the time of their partners death, must have been the legal spouse or common law partner of the deceased contributor;

(2) the deceased contributor must have contributed for the minimum contributory period; and

(3) the survivor must have been over the age of thirty five at the time of their partners death or disabled.

Legal Fees

The amount of fees payable to Class Counsel by any individual class member will not exceed the amount of money payable to such individual.

There will be no deduction from your current monthly pension for legal fees. Class Counsel will only be looking to arrears (back payments) for the payment for their fees. You may use your monthly Pension payments to meet your needs as you see fit without any concern about legal fees.

The legal fees will be paid from three sources subject to court approval. First, the government was required to pay a contribution to the costs in respect of the trial and the appeal in this proceeding. This amount has been paid. However, the amount paid was not enough to pay the full legal fees owing by the class to class counsel as approved by the Court. Second, the Supreme Court confirmed that interest is payable on the amounts awarded in this proceeding. Once the interest rate is fixed by the court, the amount available will be used to reduce the amount of money owed by class members to class counsel. It currently appears that the amount that may be paid as interest will not be sufficient to fully reduce the fees owing to Class Counsel. The third potential source is the back payments or arrears. The Court will be asked to rule on the question of whether the balance of legal fees owed to class counsel can be deducted from up to 50 per cent of the arrears payable to class members under the ruling, as requested by class counsel. This payment from the arrears will not be made unless ordered by the Court. Once the court rules on this issue Class Members will be notified of the amount of arrears that they will be receiving and how their share of arrears will be paid. In no case will the legal fees payable by any class member exceed the amount they will receive for arrears or back payments.

Future legal fees will also be subject to court approval.

If you have any questions about this proceeding please contact Class Counsel in your area:

In Ontario, Quebec, Northwest Territories, Yukon or Nunavut:
Roy Elliott Kim O'Connor LLP
Attn: Sean M. Grayson
200 Front Street West
P.O. Box #45
Toronto, ON M5V 3K2
T. (416) 362-1989
F. (416) 362-6204
Toll Free: 1(866) 877-0109
e-mail: cpp@reko.ca
website www.reko.ca

In Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland & Labrador and New Brunswick
McInnis Cooper
Attn: Jennifer Biernaskie
George Street Office
1600-5151 George Street
P.O. Box 730
Halifax, NS B3J 2V1
T. (902) 425-6500
F. (902) 425-6350

In Saskatchewan and Alberta:
Seines, Kapoor & Klimm
Attn: Bill Seines
417 Main Street
Box 2200
Melfort, SK S0E 1A0
T. (306) 752-5777
F. (306) 752-2712

In Manitoba:
Chapman Goddard Kagan
Attn: Michael Law
1864 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3J 0H2
T. (204) 831-3106
F. (204) 832-3461

In British Columbia:
Camp Fiorante Matthews
Attn: Sharon Matthews
4th Floor, Randall Building
555 West Georgia Street,
Vancouver, BC V6B 1Z6
T. (604) 689-7555
F. (604) 689-7554

Please DO NOT CALL the registrar of the court or Justice Ellen M. Macdonald. They will not be able to answer your questions about the lawsuit.

Are you a Member of the CCSD?

If not, you should consider joining because you'll enjoy great benefits including savings on all publications and a free subscription to *Perception*.

CCSD IS WORKING FOR YOU

The Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) is one of Canada's key authoritative voices on social policy issues. Since 1920, the Council has been speaking up for the needs of Canadian children and families, the disadvantaged and the poor through research, consultations, public education and advocacy. Our books and research reports provide authoritative information and analysis, covering income security and poverty, employment and labour market issues, social policy, cultural diversity, crime prevention, and much more.

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- **regular information packages** outlining CCSD activities, research highlights and new publications
- **at least 15% discount** on all publications
- and more...

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(Please call or visit our website for full details and fee options.)

Enclosed is my membership fee:

❒ $ 25 Student Member
❒ $ 55 Senior Member
❒ $ 65 Individual Member
❒ $ 100 Individual Services Plus Member
❒ $ 100 Organizational Member
❒ $ 250 Organizational Patron Member
❒ $ 500 Organizational Supporting Member
❒ Other $_____

I'd also like to make a donation of:

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❒ Tax-deductible receipt required
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